

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARAMA 00152 011929Z

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3179

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARAMARIBO 0152

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, NS

SUBJ: POSSIBLE CORRUPTION CHARGES AGAINST MINISTER SOEMITA

1. RUMORS AND ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING FOR SOME TIME AGAINST MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND FISHERIES WILLY SOEMITA, CLAIMING THAT HE HAD TAKEN BRIBES IN CONNECTION WITH THE ASSIGNMENT OF FARMS TO INDIVIDUAL BUYERS. A LAWYER IN A POSITION TO KNOW THE INSIDE STORY HAS NOW INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT THE POLICE AND PRO-CURATOR GENERAL'S OFFICE HAVE ASSEMBLED AN EXTENSIVE AND CONVINCING CASE AGAINST SOEMITA, WHICH WILL SOON BE MADE PUBLIC. SINCE SOEMITA IS A MINISTER, IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER HIS OFFENCE WOULD BE SOLELY CRIMINAL OR WHETHER IT WOULD ALSO INVOLVE MALFEASANCE OF OFFICE. TO CLEAR UP THIS MATTER, THE CASE AGAINST HIM WILL BE LAID BEFORE PARLIAMENT, WHICH WOULD BE ASKED IN A SENSE TO INDICT HIM FOR CRIMINAL TRIAL.

2. SOEMITA IS THE LEADER OF THE UNITED INDONESIAN FARMERS' PARTY (KTPI), A MEMBER OF THE RULING GOVERNMENT COMBINATION LED BY THE NATIONAL PARTY OF SURINAM (NPS) OF MINISTER PRESIDENT ARRON. SOEMITA RECENTLY WAS REELECTED UNANIMOUSLY AS HEAD OF THE KTPI, AND HAS BEEN EXPECTED TO LEAD THAT

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PAGE 02 PARAMA 00152 011929Z

PARTY IN THE COMING ELECTIONS. IF THE BRIBERY CHARGES DO IN FACT COME TO PUBLIC CONSIDERATION BY THE PARLIAMENT AND ESPECIALLY IF THEY RESULT IN A TRIAL AND CONVICTION, THERE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE AN EFFECT ON THE ELECTIONS BUT THE PRECISE NATURE OF THAT EFFECT IS UNCLEAR. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON WHETHER SOEMITA TURNS THE PARTY OVER TO SOMEONE ELSE TO CARRY THE BANNER IN THE ELECTION, OR WHETHER HE TRIES TO BRAVE

THE SITUATION OUT AND RETAIN CONTROL HIMSELF. IN THE LATTER CASE, ARRON WOULD HAVE A DIFFICULT CHOICE WHETHER TO CONTINUE COOPERATION WITH SOEMITA AT THE RISK OF OFFENDING THE PUBLIC, OR TO CUT SOEMITA AND THE KTPI OFF FROM THE COMBINATION AND RISK OFFENDING THOSE JAVANESE WHO WOULD REMAIN FAITHFUL TO SOEMITA.

3. THE FIRST REACTION OF SOME SURINAMERS IS TO ASSUME THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE POLITICIANS WILL SWEEP THE MATTER UNDER THE RUG. OUR LAWYER INFORMANT, HOWEVER, SAYS THAT THE YOUNGER POLICE AND PROCURATOR OFFICIALS ARE UP IN ARMS AGAINST CORRUPTION AND WILL REBEL IF THEIR CASE IS NOT FOLLOWED THROUGH. MOREOVER, OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES WILL HAVE AXES TO GRIND BUT PERHAPS ALSO SKELETONS TO BE REVEALED FROM CLOSETS. AS THE ELECTION SEASON STARTS, THEREFORE, SURINAM MAY WELL BE IN FOR ITS OWN WATERGATE.
ZURHELLEN

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